

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 R

DRAFTED BY D/HA/PA:FASIEVERTS/FMLC

APPROVED BY EA - PCHABIB

D/HA:MR. WILSON (DRAFT)

EA/VLC:MR. ROSENTHAL

EA/ANP:MR. MICHAUD

S/S-O:DLMACK

EA:MR. MILLER

----- 012792

R 170028Z OCT 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 246826

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, VS

SUBJECT:FOREIGN PRISONERS IN SVN

REF: A. STATE 236778 B. CANBERRA 6940

1. PLEASE PASS FOLLOWING PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM ASST.
SECRETARY HABIB TO PERMANENT SECRETARY RENOUF.

2. DURING ONE OF OUR PRIVATE CHATS IN NEW YORK THE
FOREIGN MINISTER MENTIONED THE POSSIBILITY HE WOULD BE
GOING TO VIET-NAM. I WOULD BE MOST GRATEFUL IF YOU COULD
ASK HIS HELP ON A MATTER OF SERIOUS CONCERN TO US. A
NUMBER OF AMERICANS AND OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS, AMONG
THEM AUSTRALIAN RADIO TECHNICIAN PETER WHITLOCK, HAVE BEEN
HELD AS PRISONERS OF COMMUNIST FORCES IN SOUTH VIET-NAM
SINCE BEFORE APRIL 30. MOST OF THE GROUP WERE CAPTURED
AT BAN ME THUOT DURING THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER OF THAT AREA
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MARCH 10-12, 1975. MR. WHITLOCK IS IN THAT GROUP, WHICH

ALSO INCLUDES A NUMBER OF US AND CANADIAN MISSIONARIES (AMONG THEM THREE WOMEN AND A SIX YEAR OLD CHILD) AND AMERICAN AID OFFICIAL, A YOUNG AMERICAN SCHOLAR, AND A FILIPINO. APART FROM ONE LETTER SMUGGLED OUT FROM THIS GROUP IN MAY, THERE HAS BEEN NO DIRECT WORD FROM OR ABOUT

THEM. THE PRG HAS TURNED ASIDE APPROACHES FROM MANY QUARTERS ABOUT THE PRISONERS AND TO OUR KNOWLEDGE HAS NOT EVEN PUBLICLY CONFIRMED THAT THEY ARE HELD. WE HAVE HEARD INDIRECTLY THAT THE GROUP IS HELD IN PLEIKU PROVINCE AND HAS RECEIVED ADEQUATE FOOD AND CARE, BUT IT IS A MATTER OF GROWING CONCERN THAT THERE CONTINUES TO BE NO DIRECT COMMUNICATION FROM THE GROUP OR EVEN ANY PUBLIC CONFIRMATION BY NORTH VIET-NAM OR THE PRG OF THEIR CAPTIVITY.

3. IN ADDITION, TWO OTHER AMERICAN CITIZENS ARE KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN CAPTURED. JAMES F. LEWIS, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF OUR CONSULATE GENERAL IN NHA TRANG, WAS CAPTURED APRIL 16 AT PHAN RANG, WHERE HE HAD GONE TO ASSIST VIETNAMESE EMPLOYEES OF THE CONSULATE GENERAL. ARLO N. GAY, A FISHERMAN AND MERCHANT SEAMAN LONG RESIDENT IN SOUTH VIET-NAM, WAS REPORTED CAPTURED APRIL 30 ON HON TRE ISLAND, OFF THE SOUTHERN COAST, WHERE HE HAD GONE IN SEARCH OF FUEL. A LIST OF ALL THE PRISONERS IS ATTACHED FOR YOUR INFORMATION.

4. I UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE ALREADY INQUIRED OF THE NEW VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES ABOUT PETER WHITLOCK, AND I AM INFORMED THAT THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT HAS DONE SO WITH REGARD TO THE CANADIAN MISSIONARIES IN THE BAN ME THUOT GROUP. WE OURSELVES HAVE TRIED TO PURSUE THIS WITH THE PRG THROUGH A NUMBER OF CHANNELS.

5. THERE IS SPECULATION THAT THE PRISONERS ARE BEING HELD AS "HOSTAGES" TO TRADE FOR BENEFITS SUCH AS DIPLOMATIC RECOGNITION AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. IF THIS IS SO, I REGARD IT AS A MOST UNFORTUNATE LINKAGE WHICH SHOULD BE STRONGLY RESISTED.

6. I HAVE MET WITH RELATIVES AND FRIENDS OF SEVERAL OF THE
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AMERICAN DETAINEES AND THUS KNOW AT FIRST-HAND OF THEIR GROWING DISTRESS AT THE UNJUSTIFIED PROLONGATION OF CONFINEMENT OF THEIR LOVED ONES. WE WOULD HOPE FOR THEIR EARLY RELEASE BUT, AS A MINIMAL FIRST STEP THERE SHOULD AT LEAST BE COMMUNICATION FROM THE PRISONERS TO THEIR FAMILIES. MY HOPE IN SENDING THIS MESSAGE IS THAT YOU MIGHT ASK THE MINISTER TO TAKE THIS ON AS A PERSONAL CONCERN IN CONNECTION WITH WHATEVER CONTACTS HE MAY HAVE

WITH THE VIETNAMESE AUTHORITIES.

7. WITH WARM PERSONAL REGARDS, PHILIP C. HABIB.

8. FOLLOWING IS LIST OF PRISONERS:

AMERICANS CAPTURED AT BAN ME THUOT, SOUTH VIET-NAM,
MARCH 10, 1975, (WITH DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH AND
AFFILIATION):

MR. JOHN MILLER WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS
15 AUGUST, 1930
OREFIELD, PA.

MRS. CAROLYN MILLER "
6 MAY, 1930
ALLEGHENY COUNTY
FILLMORE, N.Y.

MISS LUANNE MILLER "
[Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 12 SEP 2013]
DA NANG, VIET-NAM

MR. PAUL STRUHARIK USAID OFFICIAL
[Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 12 SEP 2013]
BARBERTON, OHIO

MR. JAY SCARBOROUGH FORD FOUNDATION SCHOLAR
[Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 12 SEP 2013]
YORK, PA.

MR. RICHARD PHILLIPS CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY
2 APRIL, 1930 ALLIANCE
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ALBANY, OREGON

MRS. LILLIAN PHILLIPS "
11 NOVEMBER, 1931
KHAMGAON BERAR, INDIA

MRS. BETTY MITCHELL "
12 JANUARY, 1921
CASS LAKE, MINNESOTA

OTHER FOREIGN NATIONALS CAPTURED WITH THIS GROUP:

MR. NORMAN JOHNSON CHRISTIAN AND MISSIONARY
22 JULY, 1936 ALLIANCE
HAMILTON, ONTARIO (CANADA)

MRS. JOAN JOHNSON "
15 JANUARY, 1936
HAMILTON, ONTARIO (CANADA)

MR. PETER WHITLOCK (AUSTRALIA)

MR. ENRIQUE TOLENTINO (PHILIPPINES)

IN ADDITION, JAMES F. LEWIS, ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER OF
THE US CONSULATE GENERAL IN NHA TRANG, BORN [Sensitive Information Removed Per NARA 12 SEP 2013], IN CHICAGO, WAS CAPTURED 16
APRIL AT PHAN RANG,
SOUTH VIET-NAM, WHERE HE HAD GONE TO ASSIST VIETNAMESE
EMPLOYEES OF THE CONSULATE.

ICRC HAS PROVIDED INFORMATION THAT MR. ARLO NELSON GAY,
BORN JAN. 27, 1924 IN WASHINGTON, A MERCHANT SEAMAN AND
FISHERMAN RESIDENT IN SOUTH VIET-NAM SINCE 1966 (US
MERCHANT MARINER'S DOCUMENT ID CARD NO. 2-258630-D), WAS
CAPTURED APRIL 30 ON HON-TRE ISLAND, OFF THE SOUTHERN
COAST OF VIET-NAM, WHERE HE HAD GONE IN SEARCH OF FUEL
FOR HIS BOAT. KISSINGER

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